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# With Nelson in the Mediterranean

## Private Papers of Dr Leonard Gillespie

By J. N. DRAPER

IN the long history of these islands there is no name more honoured or more beloved than that of Lord Nelson. Anything to do with him has an unfailing interest for the average Briton. Two of the most moving passages in our literature are Southey's account of Nelson's departure from Portsmouth on his last voyage and Thomas Hardy's description, in 'The Trumpet Major,' of the passing of the *Victory* as it carried him away. It can be imagined, then, what a thrill it was to the writer of this article, when going through a number of family documents, to discover the journal and other papers of an ancestor who had been on board the *Victory* and in close touch with Nelson in the months before Trafalgar. But although these months on the *Victory* were the outstanding event in a long life, there was much else of interest, and it seems worth while setting some of it down here.

Leonard Gillespie was born in Armagh in 1758, his father being the son of an emigrant from the west of Scotland. In 1777, after his medical training was finished, he joined the Royal Navy and was appointed second assistant surgeon to H.M.S. *Royal Oak*, a ship-of-war of seventy-four guns. In 1778 Dr Gillespie became assistant surgeon on the *Supply*, a man-of-war storeship of thirty-two guns. A year later his journal records the dramatic end of the *Supply*.

'Here in the road of Basseterre St Christopher,' he relates, 'on the 15th of June the unfortunate ship *Supply* was set fire to by the falling of a cask of rum whilst being lowered down into the hold—a light being near where the cask was staved. The ship was immediately in a flame, which the fire engines of twenty sail of the line immediately sent to act by signal could have no effect in extinguishing. The commanding officer, who was a gunner, an old experienced seaman, immediately ordered the guns, which were double-loaded, to be lowered so as to avoid firing into the large fleet of ships which surrounded the *Supply*, and to let water into the magazine by means of a cock so as to inundate the powder. At the same time the order was given to loose the sails, which was done, whilst the flames were running up by the masts and rigging, so that the seamen employed on this perilous duty on the foremast were obliged to save themselves by sliding down the stays and jump overboard from the bowsprit. The cable was instantly cut, the ship cleared from her moorings, the foresails filled and thus cast, all in a flame, before the wind. By this masterly and seaman-like promptitude of action, the flaming ship was steered before the wind through the immense fleet moored on either side of her, her guns discharging the shot in each side without other damage than damaging the masts and rigging of some of the ships around, whilst the arm-chests in the topmasts exploded as the fire came to them.

'After passing the fleet she was abandoned and run on shore before the wind, where she burned to the water's edge and exploded after midnight, the fire having commenced about 5 p.m. The lighted candle which occasioned the fire was in the apartment of a young midshipman named Barker, the brother of the lieutenant of the ship, called Scholey Barker, who was afterwards captain of the *Tribune* frigate in which he was lost with all his crew off Halifax. The unfortunate young midshipman was asleep in bed at the time of the conflagration and of course lost his life immediately. As I, L. G., was close to the hatchway, the skirt of my coat was wet with the rum but happily escaped from catching the flame, and the fire being in the after-hatchway I was precluded from getting up on deck; therefore, throwing off my coat and shoes, I jumped into the sea from the stern-port, intending to go on board by the gangway, when a boat that had just put off from the ship took me up. In this boat were four foreign seamen, impressed men, who were wishing to make their escape and who refused

to stay under the stern of the ship, in which direction I was steering the boat, and one of whom taking the tiller from me they rowed the boat ashore, leaving me with a boy belonging to the ship, with whom I rowed the boat on board the nearest ship-of-war, which was the *Isis*, carrying the flag of Admiral Graves.'

DURING the next twelve years Dr Gillespie held a variety of naval posts, both ashore and afloat, in different parts of the world; he attended lectures in Paris and London, and had a number of articles on medical subjects published. The beginning of 1791 found him in Paris, where he 'remained attending the hospitals and lectures, etc., until September the 7th, 1792, when the frightful massacres that took place at that time obliged me willingly to leave Paris and to go down to Havre intending to go over to England. I remained at Havre until the beginning of November, when, having left property in Paris, tranquillity being in some measure restored, and being anxious to be present at the trial of Louis the Sixteenth, I returned to Paris, where I assisted at the king's trial two or three times and was present when the members pronounced judgement and when the Abbé Sieyès and the duke of Orleans voted his death.'

He was surgeon on H.M.S. *Majestic*, seventy-four guns, in the naval actions of 29th May and 1st June 1794, when the French fleet was defeated by Admiral Lord Howe. After service in the West Indies he was appointed, on 18th August 1804, 'physician to the fleet in the Mediterranean under the command of Admiral Lord Nelson, having previously been nominated to His Majesty's Naval Hospital at Malta, which appointment I preferred to the former, but could not refuse the honourable appointment under Lord Nelson. November the 5th I embarked on board the *Imprévoyante* frigate for the Mediterranean; sailed upon the 7th, but from contrary winds was obliged to put into Falmouth, where we remained several days, and after a stormy passage arrived at Gibraltar on the 18th of December, when I embarked on board the *Swiftsure*, Captain Robinson, to join the squadron off Toulon, consisting of ten sail of the line with frigates and sloops. January 2nd 1805 I repaired on board His Majesty's Ship *Victory* with the flag of Lord Nelson as Physician to the fleet in room of Dr Snipe superseded on account of ill-health, and was constituted as one of His Lordship's family. On the 31st of January, the squadron in pursuit of the French fleet cruised along the west of Sicily and passed the faro [*sic*] of Messina, the famed Scylla and Charybdis, with as much ease as if we were sailing into Spithead. On February 6th the squadron anchored off Alexandria, where it was found that the French fleet had not sailed in this direction; the squadron then returned down the Mediterranean, passing the Morea and the island of Candia, and was off port La Valette in Malta on the 19th of February, having sailed about 900 leagues in twenty-four days. On the 24th February we were off Trapani in Sicily; passing afterwards the Lipari Islands and Stromboli in a state of eruption, and on March 1st arrived off Cagliari in Sardinia.'

IN the following letter, the most interesting of all the documents among Dr Gillespie's papers, he gives a vivid account of daily life on the great ship:

'On board His Majesty's Ship the *Victory*, at sea, off the island of Sardinia, January 7th, 1805.

'DEAR SISTER,

I did myself the pleasure to write to you in very great haste on the 29th ultimo, being at that time on board His Majesty's Ship the *Swiftsure*, off the coast of Catalonia, on my way to join this ship, which I effected on the 2nd inst., and I am at present fully established in my office as Physician to this Fleet, which is, thank God, in the best possible order as to health, spirits and disposition towards our gallant and revered Commander-in-Chief, Lord Nelson. As a proof of the state of health enjoyed by the seamen, I may instance the company of this ship, which, consisting of 840 men, contains only one man confined from sickness to his bed, and the other ships (twelve of the line) of from eighty-four to seventy-four guns are in a similar situation as to health, although the most of them have been stationed off Toulon for upwards of twenty months, during which time very few of the men or officers (in which number is L. Nelson) have had a foot on shore. You will perceive from this account, my dear sister, that the duties of my office are not likely at present to prove

very laborious, and my duty as Inspector of the Naval Hospitals will occasion me to visit as may be found necessary the islands of Malta and Sicily, Gibraltar and perhaps Naples, so that from appearances, and my experience hitherto, I have not any reason to be displeased with the comforts, the duties, or the emoluments of the office I at present fill, my salary being £465 per annum, and being situated so as to live in princely style free from any expense. This exemption from expense arises from my having the honour of forming one of the suite and family of L. Nelson, [in] whom noble frankness of manner, freedom from formality and pomp (so necessary to the decoration of empty little great men) can only be equalled by the unexampled glory of his naval career and the watchful and persevering diligence with which he commands this fleet. On my coming on board I found that the recommendations which my former service in the Navy had procured for me from several friends had conciliated towards me the good opinion of His Lordship and his officers and I immediately became one of the family.

'IT may amuse you, my dear sister, to read the brief journal of a day such as we here pass it at sea, in this fine climate and in these smooth seas, on board one of the largest ships in the Navy (as she mounts a hundred and ten guns, one of which carrying a twenty-four-pound shot occupies a very distinguished station in my apartment).

'Jany. 12th, off the straits of Bonifacio, a narrow arm of the sea situated between Corsica and Sardinia—we have been baffled in our progress towards the rendezvous of the squadron at the Madalena Islands for some days past by variable and contrary winds, but we expect to arrive at our destination this night or on to-morrow morning.

'To resume, my dear sister, the journal of a day—at six o'clock my servant brings me light and informs me of the hour, the wind, weather, and course of the ship, when I immediately dress and generally repair on deck; the break of day in this season and in this latitude being apparent at about half or three-quarters after six. Breakfast is announced in the Admiral's cabin, where Lord Nelson, Rear-Admiral Murray, the Captain of the Fleet, Captain Hardy, the Commander of the *Victory*, the chaplain, secretary, one or two officers of the ship and your humble servant assemble and breakfast on tea, hot rolls, toast, cold [*illegible*], etc., etc., which when finished we repair up on deck to enjoy the majestic light of the rising sun, scarcely ever obscured by clouds in this fine climate, surmounting the smooth and placid waves of the Mediterranean Sea, which supports the lofty and tremendous bulwarks of Britain, following in regular train their Admiral in the *Victory*.

'Between the hours of seven o'c. and two in the afternoon there is plenty of time for business, study, writing and exercise on deck, which different occupations together with that of occasionally visiting the Hospital of the ship, when required by the surgeon, I endeavour to vary in such a manner as to afford me sufficient employment. At two o'clock a band of music plays until within a quarter of three, when the drum beats the tune called "The Roast Beef of Old England" to announce the Admiral's dinner, which is served up exactly at three o'clock, and which generally consists of three courses and a dessert of the choicest fruit, together with three or four of the best wines, champagne and claret not excepted, and which exceeds the relish of the best viands and the most exquisite wines. If a person does not feel himself perfectly at his ease it must be his own fault, such is the hospitality which reigns here, notwithstanding the numerous titles, the four orders of knighthood won by L. Nelson and the well-earned laurels which he has acquired. Coffee and liquors [*sic*] close the dinner about half after four, or five, o'clock, after which the company generally walk the deck where the band of music plays for over an hour.

'At six o'clock tea is announced, when the company again assembles in the Admiral's cabin, where tea is served up before seven o'clock, and, as we are inclined, the party continue to converse with His Lordship, who at this time generally unbends himself, although he is at all times as free from stiffness and pomp as a regard to perfect dignity will admit, and is very communicative. At eight o'clock a rummer of punch with cake or biscuit is served up, soon after which we wish the Admiral a good night, who is generally in bed before nine o'clock. For my own part, not having been accustomed to go to bed quite so early, I generally read an hour, or spend an hour with the officers of the ship, several of whom are old acquaintances or to whom I have

been known by character. Such, my dear sister, is the history of a day at sea in fine weather or at least moderate weather in which this floating castle goes through the water with the greatest imaginable steadiness, and I have not yet been long enough on board of her to experience bad weather.

'Madalena Islands, off Sardinia, Jany. 18th. We have been at anchor in this harbour, excellent of the kind, for five days, where we are supplied with wood, water, wine, provisions and other refreshments, and where I have commenced the duties of my office without any difficulties to encounter, the business being very [*illegible*] to me. It consists in receiving returns of the state of the sick on board from the respective surgeons, visiting the ships as occasion may require, recommending to the surgeons the modes of treatment which to me seem most judicious, causing the surgeons and the sick under their care to be supplied with the medicines, refreshment and necessaries which they may require, all which offices are very grateful to me. Before we sail from this place it is likely that a ship may be despatched to England. We are at present at war with the Spaniards. Several very valuable captures have been made from them off Cadiz, but inside the Mediterranean we have not yet experienced any hostilities with them of any consequence.

'JANY. 22nd. *Victory*, at sea off the S.E. end of the island of Sardinia. The sudden arrival of a frigate (which had been stationed off Toulon to watch the motions of the enemies' squadron) on the evening of the 19th immediately changed the whole system of our operations. This frigate informed us that the enemies' squadron, consisting of eleven sail of the line, put to sea on the night of the 17th, and had chased the frigate, apparently steering towards Cagliari, the capital of Sardinia. Although we were in the midst of the operation of wooding, watering and victualling the fleet, every ship was under sail in two hours' time, and we put to sea through a narrow rocky channel, never yet well explored by any navigator. Since the night of the 19th we have been contending with adverse winds in heavy gales towards the east side of the island of Sardinia, in hourly expectation of discovering the enemy, and having everything prepared to attack him with the well-known promptitude and decision of our gallant admiral, the mo of whose conduct in dangers and critic situations I am witness to, the more am forced to admire and revere him. For my ow part I behold with great coolness the enthusias of all around me in anticipating the laurels t be gained in the expected battle. I rega such things as necessary evils in which ever man is bound to do his duty to the utmo of his power, and not as a matter of any gre degree of exultation. The humane and re flecting mind cannot but be struck with th carnage of warfare, and if to remedy th disaster towards our fellow creatures en countered in it be the duty of a Christian, I may with reason be satisfied with the par which it is my lot to act in this drama. Adieu my dear sister, I shall in all probability not resume my pen before I have to acquaint you either that we are going to engage the enemy or that they have eluded for the present the vigilance of our admiral.

'JANY. 29th. Off Palermo, the capital of Sicily. After scouring the coasts of Sardinia and this celebrated island, the capital of both of which we have passed before in search of the enemy's squadron without finding them, I now write to you, my dear sister, from the foot of Mount Etna on our way to the famous channel of Messina which divides Sicily from Italy (which we are to pass in order to continue our pursuit of the enemy) which our admiral supposes to have sailed either for the Morea in ancient Greece or for Alexandria in Egypt.

'Jany. 30th. For two days past we have been cruising off the Pharo or lighthouse of Messina between which and the Lipari Islands we have been detained by contrary winds. This range of islands is situated from seven to fourteen miles from the coast of Sicily and has undoubted marks of having been thrown up by the powerful influence of volcanoes, several of them yet smoking, and the famed mountain of Stromboli, said by the poets to be the entrance to the infernal regions, yet continues to flame, explode with noise, and eject from its lofty summit showers of red hot stones, ashes and cinders. We were on last night within a few miles of this eternal chimney of the inflamed entrails of the earth. . . . You would scarcely, my dear sister, believe that this small island is inhabited even near to the top of the mountain; people are said to

inhabit, neither deterred by the horrid grumblings of the profound abyss of liquid fire, nor by the columns of flame, fire and smoke which it sends forth, and which are so intense as to enlighten to navigators the distant coasts of Sicily and Italy, yet this is a fact that people do live here, and that no ill consequences result to them from the vicinity of this volcano, which serves them as well as the neighbouring coasts as a lighthouse and a weatherglass.

'Jany. 31st. We this day passed the famous straits of Messina with the whole of our fleet, and although the wind was against us, we went through with the greatest ease and safety, notwithstanding the dreadful rocks and shoals, Scylla and Charybdis, so celebrated for the terrors to seamen by Homer and Virgil. Our passing those straits with ships larger than ever passed them before must have offered a splendid sight to the inhabitants of the magnificent city of Messina in Sicily and those of Reggio and Scylla in Italy, situated in one of the finest countries in the world, before which we closely passed.

'OFF Alexandria in Egypt. Feby. 7th. After a rapid voyage of 360 leagues (1080 miles) the fleet arrived off this ancient and celebrated city this day, where we were disappointed in not being able to procure any intelligence of the enemy's fleet, which had not been seen on this coast. We have been all this day reconnoitring this famous city of Alexandria. . . . We are now (at sunset of a day which for warmth resembles a May day with you) directing our course under a lofty press of sail to the island of Malta on our way back towards the French coast.

'Off Toulon, March 12th. I resume my pen, my dear sister, to inform you that we have arrived on our rendezvous off this port, having passed the island of Candia, or ancient Crete, on the 12th ult., the lofty and celebrated mountain of which, Ida, we saw covered with snow. On the 15th we were off the coast of the Morea in Greece, where we were joined by a frigate with intelligence that the French squadron, apparently bound up the Mediterranean Sea, had been disabled in a gale of wind and put back to Toulon without effecting any purpose but that of disabling their own ships (in a gale which we only regarded as a common occurrence, and [which] did not prevent us from sitting down to dinner of three courses) and of rendering their unfortunate half-drowned freshwater sailors and soldiers sick to death of the sea.

'On the 19th of February we were off the capital of Malta, where we only continued a few hours, continuing our course down the Mediterranean, coasting along the island of Sicily, and after a stormy and tedious passage we arrived on the 27th off Cagliari, the capital of Sardinia, where we watered the ships and got a supply of cattle, about seventy or eighty head of oxen being embarked on board the fleet, which was then found and still continues to be in the best state, there not being more than five or six men confined to bed from sickness. Indeed the weather is so fine and temperate that it is much more salubrious than a more northern climate. I have not been seated an hour at a fireside since the second week in December, and have not found the want of it, nor have been affected with a cold since I entered the Mediterranean. I cannot recollect that we have had one day pass in which the sun has not made its appearance and we have had any little rain, or dank or humid weather. At present we are in hourly expectation of falling in with the *Renown*, a ship which is to go to England, so that I shall be obliged speedily to close this very long epistle, which I sincerely hope may come to your hands in half the time that has elapsed since I commenced to write it.

'The very unexpected news of the commencement of a negociation [*sic*] for peace, which we received a few days since, gives me great pleasure, and as both parties seem to be convinced that it is their mutual interest to make peace and allow their subjects of both empires to enjoy the fruits of their industry in tranquillity, we may, let us fondly hope, expect that the termination of the war may arrive with as much promptitude as the commencement of it was unexpected.

'His Majesty's Ship *Renown* is just upon the eve of departure for England, by which I send this enclosed to my friend Mr Steward, Secretary to the Commissioners of Sick and Wounded Seamen.

'Remember me affectionately to all our friends and relations, and believe me, dear sister, your ever affectionate brother,

'LEONARD GILLESPIE.

'MRS JANE HALL,
Armagh, Ireland.'

# A Naval Physician in Nelson's Day

## The Journal of Dr Leonard Gillespie

By J. N. DRAPER

DR GILLESPIE'S last months in the *Victory* are briefly recorded in his Journal*: 'After making a voyage to the West Indies in chase of the French fleet which had arrived at Martinique, we anchored at Barbadoes on the fourth of June, where we embarked the General, Commander-in-Chief (Sir William Myers), and part of his army for the island of Trinidad, where it was expected to meet with the French fleet, but where we learned that they had already sailed from Martinico for Europe.

'On the 19th of July the squadron arrived at Gibraltar, watered and victualled at Tetuan in Africa and on the 18th we arrived at Spithead in the *Victory* with part of the fleet, when I received Lord Nelson's permission to go to London, and where by application to the Lords of the Admiralty I had permission to resign my appointment as Physician to the Fleet, being in indifferent health and having served a sufficiently long period on foreign stations; the secretary to Lord Nelson, Mr Scott, and Captain Adair of the Marines, both of whom had families, and who, as well as myself, were tired of a seafaring life, had in a social hour joined me in asserting our mutual determination to avoid if possible the going to sea again; but having re-embarked with Lord Nelson on his last voyage, they were both unfortunately killed on the quarter-deck of the *Victory* a few minutes before Lord Nelson himself fell a victim to his country's glory at the battle of Trafalgar on the 21st of October.

'On the 25th of October I declined the appointment to the naval hospital at Yarmouth, to which I was nominated by the Lords of the Admiralty. I passed part of that month at Cheltenham, and passed the winter in London, when I attended officially as Physician at the funeral of Lord Nelson on the 9th of January 1806.'

* See 'With Nelson in the Mediterranean: Private Papers of Dr Leonard Gillespie,' by J. N. Draper, in *Chambers's Journal* for May 1945.

OF Dr Gillespie's life during the next twenty-five years there is, unfortunately, no information, as the pages covering this period are missing from the Journal. He evidently did not accept any further naval appointments and probably spent most of the time abroad—he was fairly well off. When the record resumes in May 1830 he has left Paris for London, where he 'remained during the epoch of the death of George the Fourth and of the Revolution in France.' He returned to Paris in October, and for almost all the remaining years of his life he spent the winter months in that city, returning to England and Ireland for a round of visits in the summer and early autumn.

In June 1831 he mentions that he 'went from Manchester by railway to Liverpool in three and a half hours' and on 8th September he watched William the Fourth's coronation procession. In June 1832 he is again in England, and in the following month he visits London, where 'the cholera had committed great ravages, although by no means so great as at Paris, where upwards of thirty thousand persons died of it.' He comments on the passing of the Reform Bill as having given much satisfaction 'to the great majority of the people, who have celebrated that triumph over ancient abuses, corrupt practices and deeply rooted prejudices by public feasts and rejoicings.' On his 1833 visit he 'saw launched at Chatham dockyard the noble three-deck ship *Waterloo* of a hundred and twenty guns, before an immense crowd of spectators, several steam vessels coming down from London filled with passengers; after which a review and a petite-guerre were exhibited by 15,000 troops.' On the 19th of June he went down the River Medway 'with a party to Sheerness to visit the dockyards, in the basin of which saw two three-deck ships and counted twenty-seven line of battle ships in the river, and as many frigates.' A year later he watched the Derby on 30th May, 'twenty-three horses being entered; the prize was supposed to amount to £3975. The day

being fine, it was computed that there were 2,000 carriages, 8,000 horsemen, with 50,000 persons, chiefly from London, among whom were found a number of sharpers, pickpockets, mendicants, gipsies, comprising all the rabble of London.'

There is a fine head-and-shoulders portrait in oils of Dr Gillespie at this period. It was painted by Charles Louis Bazin in 1837, when its subject was seventy-nine, and shows him dressed in his uniform as Physician to the Mediterranean Fleet. He is a redoubtable figure, with pure white hair brushed closely back from a broad sweep of forehead. His face wears a stern, tight-lipped expression, and is distinguished by its high colour, sharp blue eyes, and a bulbous, rubicund nose. His uniform is of a dark colour with gold facings and epaulettes and a high red collar, above which protrudes a stiff white collar. He looks in robust health, but it was at this period that he began to complain of an asthmatic cough, on account of which he broke his usual practice in the winter of 1840-41 by taking up his quarters in Naples. He was unfortunate, however, in encountering an exceptionally severe Italian winter.

ON 6th April 1841, six weeks before his eighty-third birthday, he left Naples on the first stage of his last, but certainly not least adventurous journey to England. After some weeks of extensive sight-seeing in Rome he resumed his journey northwards. Even for a young and able-bodied man travelling long distances a hundred years ago was no light undertaking, over bad roads, in draughty and uncomfortable vehicles, with dubious wayside accommodation. At this time of the year travellers with a long journey before them would set out at three or four o'clock in the morning, covering perhaps fifty miles in the ensuing twelve hours. Dr Gillespie's route lay through Civita Vecchia, Leghorn, Turin, Arona, across Lake Maggiore to Magadino and on to Bellinzona and Airolo. This part of the journey took him a fortnight and involved such diverse modes of transport as voiturins, diligences, vetturini, cabriolets, and steamboats.

Airolo is a village nearly four thousand feet high at the head of the Ticino valley, and the entrance to the Alpine pass of St Gothard between Lake Maggiore in Italy and Lake Lucerne in Switzerland. (The St Gothard Tunnel was not begun till 1872.) Deceived by optimistic assurances which he had been given at Bellinzona about the practicability of the passage of Mt St Gothard, Dr Gillespie set out from Airolo, but had gone only a short distance when 'the diligence could proceed no further and we, the passengers, were placed in char-a-bancs, which were drawn along the edge of the precipice, frightful to behold. At nine o'clock p.m. after a most dangerous passage we arrived in a heavy shower of rain at the Hospice near the summit of the passage, where the monks and attendants behaved to us with the utmost cordiality and hospitality. Here we learned that, the char-a-bancs not being capable of passing, it would be necessary to take sledges, and that on the 28th of April an immense avalanche having fallen by which three persons in the carriage of a voiturin had perished and three escaped with great difficulty, the road having been completely covered for about a quarter of a mile, it was necessary to cut through it a passage of from fifteen to twenty feet, and through this passage we were carried with great danger from the narrowness of the passage and the steepness and irregularity of the road. We passed about an hour in the sledges, after which we got in the char-a-bancs again to descend the mountain, which conveyed us along these tremendous precipices and steep, tortuous, zig-zag and declivious roads, not more than two feet from the edge of a perpendicular precipice, and where if the horses had stumbled we must have been precipitated to the bottom.

'About midnight we arrived at an hotel, where a young man named Schilzer, who was a fellow-passenger with us, and the son of the house, with his mother and sister, afforded us the utmost attention and hospitality. I regretted not having stopped there all night. After midnight we proceeded down the mountain in calèches, passing over tremendous precipices, and along the river which goes to Lucerne, forming an almost continuous cataract with numerous cataracts from the mountains. This journey continued five hours, the greatest part of which was on the edge of the precipice. On the 30th I had to make up my mind in a great measure to be the victim of my imprudent journey, so rashly undertaken from bad information. As to my three fellow-travellers, one of whom was the Prince of Orange, who seemed to be sleeping soundly, I envied them their callous feelings with regard to our danger. I was also very sleepy, but being placed in the

forepart of an open calèche with a precipice on my right, I was obliged to hold fast from the apprehension of being thrown out by the violent motion of the carriage, and I was consequently afraid of falling asleep. Our driver, as well as all the other persons employed in assisting us over the mountain, behaved with the utmost courage, attention, exertion, honesty and disinterestedness, receiving with thankfulness the trifling remuneration bestowed on them. In fine, thanks to Divine Providence, we arrived at Flüelen near Altorf at 5 a.m. and embarked on the steam-vessel for Lucerne, where we arrived at noon and lodged at the Cygne, a new hotel.'

THE remainder of the journey home was accomplished in easy stages, without incident, the route lying through Zurich, Baden, Basle, Mannheim, Coblenz, Düsseldorf, Rotterdam, and Antwerp, and Dr Gillespie reached London on 12th July. Two months later he set out once more for Paris, where he spent his last months, dying there on 13th January 1842 in his eighty-fourth year.

He had been at school with Wellington's elder brother, had heard the guns firing in celebration of the second anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in Washington's camp, been present at the trial of Louis the Sixteenth, served on Nelson's staff on board the *Victory*, met and talked with a niece of Bonaparte's, watched the coronation procession of William the Fourth, and seen the celebrations in London after the passing of the Reform Bill; he had spent his professional life at sea on board the old wooden ships and made most of his journeys on land in diligences, coaches, and other horse-drawn vehicles, yet he had lived to travel in steamships and on railway trains. His was certainly a full life.

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# Museums in Underland

By ERIC HICKS

IT will be many months from the end of the war with Germany before it will be possible once again to display the nation's treasures in museums and art galleries in all parts of the country. Grievous losses of priceless objects —notably manuscripts and books—have induced the custodians of those which remain to exercise the utmost caution.

The Standing Commission for Museums appointed, in 1939, a committee representative of the national museums, picture galleries, and libraries, under the chairmanship of the Director of the British Museum. It is this body which has drawn up the schedule determining the order in which the various objects are to be returned from their places of safety in different parts of Great Britain. The precise location of many of these will probably never be revealed.

It was not until the summer of 1915 that the first bombs fell on London during the last war. Sir Frederick Kenyon,* who was then Director of the British Museum, has described how a large proportion of the collections were hastily evacuated to a new Post Office section of the London Underground railway system. Happily, little damage was suffered during the two journeys, but nevertheless in 1919 the trustees deemed it prudent to ask the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research to make a scientific examination of the collections and give advice as to the restoration and preservation of objects. Dr Alexander Scott undertook this investigation, in a small temporary laboratory which had been equipped at the British Museum. His conclusions, which were embodied in three reports, laid the foundations for a great deal of other work in this field. The League of Nations organised a series of conferences for the special study of problems affecting the preservation of works of art and of antiquities.

ARMED with this scientific knowledge and the certainty that war was not very distant, the committee under the chairmanship of the Director of the British Museum, Sir John Forsdyke, produced a handbook entitled *A.R.P. in Museums, etc.* This proved of great assistance to curators all over the country in preparing plans for the protection of their collec-

* Kenyon, Sir F. G., *The British Museum in Wartime*, 1934. David Murray Foundation Lecture, Univ. of Glasgow (Jackson, Wylie & Co.).